August 23, 2007

Public Notice for Water Quality Certification and/or Waste Discharge Requirements (Dredge/Fill Projects)

Humboldt County DPW – Squaw Creek Bridge Abutment Protection Project
WDID No. 1B07092WNHU

Humboldt County

On August 23, 2007, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) received an application from the Humboldt County Department of Public Works (applicant), requesting Federal Clean Water Act, section 401, Water Quality Certification for activities to repair a bridge abutment footing on the Fieldbrook Road Bridge over Squaw Creek near Fieldbrook. The proposed project will cause disturbances to waters of the United States associated with Squaw Creek in the Blue Lake Hydrologic Area No. 109.10.

The bridge over Squaw Creek at Fieldbrook Road is a twenty-nine foot long and twenty –three foot wide reinforced concrete structure that was built in 1951. The bridge has a long history of inspections that indicate foundation exposure at both abutments. The bridge inspection report from September 2003 documents the bridge as “scour critical” along the southern abutment. Although previous inspection reports have stated that both abutments were in need of scour protection, recent inspections have documented that the channel adjacent to the northern abutment is currently aggraded with sediment above the footing. The proposed project involves protecting the southern bridge abutment only to minimize impacts to the streambed and channel. The proposed repair is considered a temporary repair because the bridge is over fifty years old and should be replaced in the near future.

The proposed project involves the use of concrete filled burlap sacks to plug the void space of the undermined and scoured area along the base of the southern abutment footing. The scoured area is approximately twelve feet long, three feet wide, and three feet deep. The first project activity involves the use of hand tools to clean out approximately one cubic yard of sediment from under the abutment footing. The removed material will be transported out of the stream channel to an upland disposal site. Burlap sacks will be placed in the void area and pre-mixed concrete will be pumped from the road through a pipe and into the burlap sacks. As the sacks fill with concrete they will fill in the void space under the abutment footing. Approximately four cubic yards of concrete will be used to fill approximately twelve burlap sacks. Upon completion of the project, the disturbed streambed will be restored as much as possible to the pre-disturbed natural condition and all excess materials will be removed.

The proposed project will be implemented during the late summer when Squaw Creek is dry at the project location or when flows are very low. If water is present under the bridge, silt fences will be placed upstream and downstream of the work area to prevent disturbed sediment from entering the water, and the surface flows will be diverted

around the repair work area. If present, water will be diverted around the work area by installing a sandbag diversion dam with a screened 18-inch diameter pipe to carry the water around the work area. If subsurface water is encountered, the water will be pumped to a flat area above the streambank and allowed to infiltrate. No concrete will be poured into flowing water. All concrete washings, including all material used for cleaning concrete from tools and any concrete wastes will be contained and disposed of properly.

The proposed project will result in 36 square feet (0.001 acre) and 12 linear feet of permanent impacts to an area of the streambank that is already covered by a concrete bridge abutment and footing. The proposed project will result in a maximum of 200 square feet and 30 linear feet of temporary impacts to the streambed depending on the need to divert surface water around the work area. Compensatory mitigation is not required for the proposed project. Noncompensatory mitigation for this project includes the use of Best Management Practices for sediment and turbidity control and the placement of concrete in a waterway. Construction activities are expected to take three days to complete.

The applicant has applied for authorization from the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform the project under Nationwide Permit Number 3, pursuant to Clean Water Act, section 404. The Humboldt County Department of Public Works has determined that this project is statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (section 15301 – existing facilities and section 15304 – minor alterations to land). Based on a review of the project information submitted to date, Regional Water Board staff have determined that this project is categorically exempt from CEQA review (Class 1, Section 15301 – existing facilities) and anticipate filing a Notice of Exemption for this project.

Regional Water Board staff are proposing to regulate this project pursuant to Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1341) and/or Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act authority. In addition, staff will consider all comments submitted in writing and received at this office by mail during a 21-day comment period that begins on the first date of issuance of this letter and ends at 5:00 p.m. on the last day of the comment period. If you have any questions, please contact staff member Dean Prat at (707) 576-2801 within 21 days of the posting of this notice.